

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
ERDA-05 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 OES-07 /084 W
-----088312 220537Z /14

R 211830Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7960
SECDEF WASHDC
JCS WASHDC
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSIES ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 17293

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (BROWN, HAROLD R.) , MPOL, IT
SUBJECT: VISIT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE TO ROME

1. SUMMARY. SECRETARY BROWN'S OCTOBER 14-15 VISIT TO ROME WAS AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS. IN HIS MEETINGS WITH PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI, FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI, DEFENSE MINISTER RUFFINI AND OTHER HIGH OFFICIALS, THE SECRETARY MADE CLEAR THAT THE UNITED STATES TAKES THIS

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COUNTRY SERIOUSLY, REGARDS IT AND INTENDS TO TREAT IT AS A MEMBER OF

OUR "INNER CIRCLE OF FRIENDS". THE SECRETARY ESTABLISHED AN EXCELLENT RAPPORT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE DEFENSE MINISTERS WHO IMPRESSED HIM BY HIS FIRM COMMITMENT TO ITALY'S FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE ALLIANCE. IN HIS DISCUSSIONS THE SECRETARY CONCENTRATED ON THREE PRINCIPAL ISSUES: THE NEED FOR ITALY TO BEAR ITS FAIR SHARE

IN MODERNIZING ALLIANCE WEAPONS SYSTEMS, THE "NEUTRON-BOMB" CONTROVERSY, AND NPW (NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP) VISITS. HIS INTERVIEWS WITH THE PRESS AND CONVERSATIONS WITH ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS WERE HIGHLY USEFUL. END SUMMARY.

2. SECRETARY OF DEFENSE HAROLD R. BROWN'S VISIT TO ROME ON OCTOBER 14 AND 15 WAS BRIEF, BUT ENTIRELY SUCCESSFUL. THE SECRETARY MET WITH PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI, DEFENSE MINISTER RUFFINI AND FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI; WAS THE GUEST OF HONOR AT A DINNER HOSTED BY MINISTER RUFFINI; WAS INTERVIEWED BY GERMAN JOURNALISTS,, BY ITALIAN STATE TELEVISION (RAI) AND SPOKE TO LEADING ITALIAN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AT A WORKING COCKTAIL AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE.

3. THE SECRETARY ESTABLISHED A QUICK RAPPORT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE DEFENSE AND FOREIGN MINISTERS. HE SPOKE FRANKLY ON DEFENSE ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN, PLACING THE DISCUSSION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE GOI'S FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS. THIS COMBINATION, NEEDLESS TO SAY, WAS GREATLY APPRECIATED BY THE ITALIANS.

4. THE SECRETARY IN TURN HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR ITALIAN VIEWS ON THE THREATS TO THE ALLIANCE, OF THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM PROBLEMS IT FACES POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY, AND NOTED HIS HOSTS' FIRM SUPPORT FOR THE ALLIANCE AND FOR ITALY'S PARTICIPATION IN IT.

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5. ON SPECIFIC ISSUES, THE SECRETARY ADDRESSED ITALY'S FAIR SHARE IN BEARING MUTUAL DEFENSE COSTS, PARTICULARLY ITS PARTICIPATION -- IN A REAL RATHER THAN SYMBOLIC WAY -- IN THE AWACS PROGRAM. HE THANKED THE ITALIANS FOR INCREASING THE NUMBER OF PORTS AVAILABLE TO OUR NPW'S, ACKNOWLEDGED THE TOUCHINESS OF THAT ISSUE HERE AND EMPHASIZED THAT THE USG WOULD ENDEAVOR TO BE AS SENSITIVE TO ITALIAN PUBLIC AFFAIRS NEEDS ON IT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. THE SECRETARY PERSONALLY HELPED US COPE WITH CRITICISM OF OUR NUCLEAR SUBMARINES' PRESENCE AT LA MADDALENA BY AUTHORIZING TOUR OF THE SSN RAY FOR THE CHAIRMAN AND NINE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DEFENSE COMMISSION OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. THE RAY HAD SPARKED ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS WHEN IT SCRAPED ITS BOTTOM OFF SARDINIA RECENTLY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 17293

6. THE "NEUTRON BOMB" ISSUE WAS DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH. WHILE
THE ITALIANS UNDERSTOOD THE WEAPON'S RATIONALE, AND APPEARED TO
FAVORED ITS DEPLOYMENT, THEY MADE CLEAR THEIR UNHAPPINESS OVER THE
PUBLIC AND PRESS HANDLING OF THE ISSUE. THE SECRETARY'S PRESENTATION
ON
THIS ISSUE SHOULD IMPROVE THE SITUATION, HOWEVER. THE PRIME
MINISTER'S
DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR, LA ROCCA, TELLS US THAT AS A RESULT, THE PRIME
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MINISTER HAS ORDERED DEFENSE MINISTER RUFFINI AND OTHER HIGH
OFFICIALS
TO UNDERTAKE AN EXPANDED PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN TO PLACE THE
WEAPON
IN A RATIONAL CONTEXT.

7. PRESS COVERAGE OF SECRETARY BROWN'S VISIT TO ROME WAS LIGHT DUE

TO THE FACT THAT HE HAD BEEN IN ITALY MOST OF THE PREVIOUS WEEK. TELEVISION FOOTAGE OF HIS ARRIVAL AT ROME'S CIAMPINO AIRPORT WAS CARRIED ON BOTH NATIONAL TELEVISION NEWSCASTS AND MOST PAPERS ANNOUNCED HIS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE. MORE IMPORTANT WAS THE SECRETARY'S CONTRIBUTION TO EMBASSY PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMING ON DEFENSE MATTERS. DURING HIS STAY, HE GRANTED A SHORT INTERVIEW TO

A GERMAN TELEVISION TEAM THAT HAD JUST COMPLETED FILMING NATO OPERATION "DISPLAY-DETERMINATION," A MUCH LONGER APPEARANCE ON ITALIAN TELEVISION, AND MET PRIVATELY WITH A NUMBER OF ITALIAN POLITICAL FIGURES. THE ITALIAN TELEVISION PROGRAM, ON WHICH SECRETARY BROWN WAS QUESTIONED ON SEVERAL ASPECTS OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE, INCLUDING THE ER/RB WEAPON AND WARSAW PACT FORCE LEVELS, AND DISARMAMENT, WAS BROADCAST DURING PRIME TIME ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, TO AN ESTIMATED AUDIENCE OF 20 MILLION. HIS HUMANISTIC APPROACH AND CAREFUL EXPLANATION OF HOW USG POLICIES MESH WITH SECURITY OBJECTIVES WAS PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE. SECRETARY BROWN'S ANSWERS TO QUESTION ON TROOP LEVELS IN EUROPE AND THE ER/RB WEAPON WERE PICKED UP BY SEVERAL COMMENTATORS WHO EITHER INCORPORATED PARTS OF HIS STATEMENTS IN NEWSPAPER COMMENTARIES OR MENTIONED HIS REMARKS TO EMBASSY OFFICERS. SIGNIFICANTLY, ONE OF THE MOST BALANCED AND PENETRATING ARTICLES YET TO APPEAR IN THE ITALIAN PRESS ON THE ER/RB

EAPON AND ITS PLACE IN NATO DEFENSES APPEARED TODAY (OCTOBER 21) IN IL GIORNALE. THAT ARTICLE WAS BASED ALMOST WHOLLY ON SECRETARY BROWN'S

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TELEVISION INTERVIEW.

8. COMMENT: THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT APPRECIATED THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. THEY, AND WE, SEE IT AS A CONCRETE REALIZATION OF THE UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED BY PRESIDENT CARTER AND PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI IN THEIR JULY MEETING, NAMELY, TO ACCORD ITALY "FIRST RANK" STATUS AMONG OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES. THE VISIT REAFFIRMED OUR COMMITMENT TO TAKE CAREFUL AND SENSITIVE ACCOUNT OF ITALY'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS NEEDS, PARTICULARLY ON OFTEN CONTROVERSIAL DEFENSE MATTERS. AND THE VISIT SHOWED HOW FRUITFUL FURTHER VISITS OF THIS CALIBER CAN BE TO US-ITALIAN RELATIONS.

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